

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the numbering of the claims as follows, all without prejudice or disclaimer.

1-31 (Cancelled)

32. (Original) A method of fabricating personal care absorbent articles, comprising:

(a) advancing along a processing line a first web having a first length, the first web being suitable for use in making a personal care article, and comprising at least workpieces and intervening elements releasably attached to each other using releasable fasteners to thereby define such first web and self-supporting longitudinal strength of such web, whereby such workpieces and intervening elements generally define the structure and the structural integrity of the first web;

(b) concurrently advancing a second web having a second length along the processing line and generally parallel to the first web, and defining a space between the first and second webs, the second web being suitable for use in making such personal care article;

(c) applying and attaching absorbent crotch portion elements to the first and second webs at spaced intervals along the lengths of the respective webs, and bridging the space between the first and second webs, thereby to form a composite web comprising the first and second webs and the respective crotch portions, a given respective crotch portion element having a front segment attached to the first web and a rear segment attached to the second web;

(d) bringing the first and second webs of the composite web into facing relationship with each other, including bringing the respective front and rear segments of the respective crotch portion elements into facing relationship with each other;

(e) forming side seam bonds joining the first and second webs to each other at spaced locations along the length of the composite web, thereby to form a composite web sausage having an indefinite length; and

(f) separating discrete lengths of the composite web sausage from the indefinite-length composite web sausage at or proximate respective ones of the side seam bonds, thereby to define respective personal care articles.

33. (Original) A method as in Claim 32 wherein such workpieces can be resiliently extended at least 100 percent from unstressed lengths thereof.

34. (Original) A method as in Claim 32, including releasably attaching the workpieces to the intervening elements by employing mechanical fasteners and corresponding hook receptive areas on respective ones of the workpieces and intervening elements.

35. (Original) A method as in Claim 32 wherein the releasable attachment of the workpieces to the intervening elements comprises the only attachment between the workpieces and the intervening elements.

36. (Original) A personal care article comprising a front portion, a rear portion, and a crotch portion extending between said front portion and said rear portion, said front and rear portions each comprising opposing first and second side sections and a central section between the respective side sections, said rear portion and said front portion being attached to each other at respective side sections of the front and rear portions by side

seams, said front portion comprising first and second workpieces corresponding to the side sections of the front portion, and an intervening element corresponding to the front central section, the first and second workpieces being releasably attached to the intervening element by releasable fasteners, the releasable fasteners, prior to use by a user, comprising the only attachment attaching the first and second workpieces to the front central section.

37. (Original) A personal care article as in Claim 36 wherein said first and second workpieces can be resiliently extended at least 100 percent from unstressed lengths thereof.

38. (Original) A personal care article as in Claim 36 wherein said releasable fasteners comprise mechanical fasteners, received in hook receptive material defined at said intervening element.

39. (Original) A personal care article as in Claim 36 wherein said first and second workpieces are attached to the intervening element by fasteners having attachment capability over a substantial portion of an area defining the intervening element.

40. (Original) A personal care article as in Claim 36 wherein the first and second workpiece are attached to intervening element by first and second attachments defining mechanical fasteners on one of the respective workpieces and/or the intervening element interacting with mechanical loops on the other of the respective workpieces and/or the intervening element.

[[44.]] 41. (Currently Amended) A processing line for forming a personal care article having a front portion, a rear portion, and a crotch portion extending between the front portion and the rear portion, the front and rear portions each comprising opposing first

and second side sections and a central section between the respective side sections, the processing line comprising:

means for attaching the rear portion and the front portion to each other at respective side sections of the front and rear portions by side seams, and the front portion comprising first and second workpieces corresponding to the side sections of the front portion, and an intervening element corresponding to the front central section; and

means for releasably attaching the first and second workpieces to the intervening element by releasable fasteners, the releasable fasteners, prior to use by a user, comprising the only attachment attaching the first and second workpieces to the front central section.

[[45.]] 42. (Currently Amended) The processing line for forming a personal care article as in Claim 44, further comprising means for attaching the releasable fasteners and the intervening element together.

[[46.]] 43. (Currently Amended) The processing line for forming a personal care article as in Claim 45, wherein the means for attaching are mechanical fasteners received in hook receptive material defined at the intervening element.

[[47.]] 44. (Currently Amended) The processing line for forming a personal care article as in Claim 44, wherein the first and second workpieces are attached to the intervening element by fasteners having attachment capability over a substantial portion of an area defining the intervening element.

[[48.]] 45. (Currently Amended) The processing line for forming a personal care article as in Claim 44, wherein the first and second workpieces are attached to the intervening element by first and second attachments defining mechanical fasteners on one

- of the respective workpieces and/or the intervening element interacting with mechanical loops on the other of the respective workpieces and/or the intervening element.